

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the present application:

Listing of Claims:

1. – 122. (Canceled)

123. (Currently Amended) A method of implanting a spinal stabilization system, comprising:

forming an incision at a desired site through skin of a patient;

anchoring a first bone fastener assembly to a first vertebral body at a first target location, said first bone fastener assembly comprising a first bone screw and a first collar, said first collar coupled to the first bone screw;

disposing a first sleeve between the incision and the first bone fastener assembly, the first sleeve having a first proximal end region and a first distal end region with a first passage defined therebetween, the first sleeve defining a first channel in communication with the first passage along at least a portion of a length of the first sleeve, the first distal end region being disposed proximate the first bone fastener assembly and the first proximal end region being disposed proximate the incision;

anchoring a second bone fastener assembly to a second vertebral body at a second target location, said second bone fastener assembly comprising a second bone screw and a second collar, said second collar coupled to the second bone screw;

disposing a second sleeve towards the second bone fastener assembly, the second sleeve having a second proximal end region and a second distal end region with a second passage defined therebetween, the second sleeve defining a second channel in communication with the second passage along at least a portion of a length of the second

sleeve, the second distal end region being disposed proximate the second bone fastener assembly and the second proximal end region being disposed proximate the incision;

inserting an elongate member through the incision and along the first passage to a position adjacent the first collar ~~bone fastener assembly~~; and

securing the elongate member to the first collar ~~bone fastener assembly~~.

124. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 123, wherein anchoring the first bone fastener assembly includes screwing ~~advancing~~ the first bone screw to the first vertebral body at ~~fastener assembly through the incision to the~~ first target location.

125. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 124, wherein the first sleeve is detachably coupled to the first collar ~~bone fastener assembly~~ prior to screwing ~~advancing~~ the first bone screw to the first vertebral body ~~fastener assembly through the incision~~.

126. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 123, wherein the elongate member is inserted substantially longitudinally through the incision.

127. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 126, wherein the elongate member is angled in a first orientation relative to the skin prior to inserting through the incision and rotated to a second orientation subcutaneously.

128. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 123, wherein during inserting, at least a portion of the elongate member extends outwardly from the first sleeve through the first channel.

129. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 123, wherein the ~~bone fastener assembly~~ first collar has a slot defined therein to receive the elongate member, and further wherein the first channel of the first sleeve is defined at least in the first distal end region

of the first sleeve; the first channel being aligned with the slot while the elongate member is inserted to the position adjacent the first collar ~~bone fastener assembly~~.

130. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 129, wherein the ~~bone fastener assembly includes a~~ first collar comprises ~~comprising~~ a body and at least two arms extending therefrom, the slot being defined between the arms.

131. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 123, wherein the elongate member is secured to the first collar ~~bone fastener assembly~~ by engaging at least one closure member to the first collar ~~bone fastener assembly~~.

132. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 131, wherein the at least one closure member is delivered along the first passage of the first sleeve to the first collar ~~bone fastener assembly~~.

133. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 123, wherein the first channel is defined along a majority of the length of the first sleeve.

134. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 123, wherein the first sleeve includes a sleeve flange and wherein the first collar includes a collar flange, and wherein the sleeve flange is configured to mate with the collar flange to inhibit translation of the first sleeve relative to the first collar ~~a sleeve wall, the sleeve wall defining at least a portion of the channel~~.

135. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 123, further comprising estimating a distance between the first collar and the second collar ~~wherein inserting comprises grasping the elongate member with a positioning tool~~.

136. (Canceled)

137. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~[[136]]~~ 123, further comprising:

forming a dilated tissue plane between the first target location and the second target location.

138. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 137, wherein forming the dilated tissue plane includes moving a tissue wedge from the first sleeve toward the second target location.

139. (Canceled)

140. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~[[139]]~~ 123, wherein the second channel of the second sleeve is aligned facing the first channel of the first sleeve; and further wherein during inserting positioning of the elongate member, the second end portion of the elongate member is received within the second channel of the second sleeve.

141. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~[[139]]~~ 123, further comprising using a frame to couple ~~coupling~~ the second proximal end region of the second sleeve to the first proximal end region of the first sleeve.

142. (Canceled)

143. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~[[142]]~~ 123, wherein at least one of the first channel of the first sleeve and the channel of the second sleeve extends substantially the entire length thereof, and further wherein, during inserting of the elongate member, the first end portion of the elongate member is received in the first

channel ~~of the first sleeve~~ and the second end portion of the elongate member is received in the second channel ~~of the second sleeve~~.

144. (Canceled)

145. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~[[144]]~~ 135, further comprising selecting a length of the elongate member corresponding to the estimated distance.

146. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~[[136]]~~ 123, further comprising:

anchoring a third bone fastener assembly to a third target location between the first target location and the second target location, said third bone fastener assembly comprising a third bone screw and a third collar, said third collar coupled to the third bone screw; and further wherein ~~inserting~~ positioning the elongate member includes positioning an intermediate portion of the elongate member adjacent the third collar bone fastener assembly, and securing the elongate member includes securing the intermediate portion of the elongate member to the third collar bone fastener assembly.

147. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 146, further comprising:

detachably coupling an intermediate sleeve to the third collar bone fastener assembly, the intermediate sleeve having a third proximal end region and a third distal end region with a third passage defined therebetween, the intermediate sleeve defining opposing channels in communication with the third passage along at least a length of the intermediate sleeve; and further wherein during positioning of the elongate member, the elongate member extends through the opposing channels of the intermediate sleeve.

148. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 123, further comprising sequentially dilating a working space between the incision and the first target location prior to anchoring the first bone screw fastener assembly.

149. (Canceled)

150. (Canceled)

151. (New) The method of claim 123, wherein inserting the elongate member includes inserting the elongate member along the second passage to a position adjacent the second collar.

152. (New) A method for performing spinal stabilization surgery, said method comprising:

- coupling a first sleeve to a first bone fastener assembly, said first sleeve comprising a first sleeve flange, said first bone fastener assembly comprising a first bone screw and a first collar, said first collar coupled to the first bone screw, and said first collar comprising a first slot and a first collar flange, wherein said first sleeve flange detachably couples with said first collar flange to inhibit translational motion of the first collar relative to the first sleeve;

- anchoring the first bone fastener assembly to a first vertebral body;

- coupling a second sleeve to a second bone fastener assembly, said second sleeve comprising a second sleeve flange, said second bone fastener assembly comprising a second bone screw and a second collar, said second collar coupled to the second bone screw, and said second collar comprising a second slot and a second collar flange, wherein said second sleeve flange detachably couples with said second collar flange to inhibit translational motion of the second collar relative to the second sleeve;

- anchoring the second bone fastener assembly to a second vertebral body;

- and

inserting a rod between the first slot and the second slot,
wherein the inserted rod provides support between the first vertebral body and the second vertebral body.

153. (New) A method of implanting a spinal stabilization system utilizing minimally-invasive surgery, said method comprising:

detachably coupling a first bone fastener assembly to a first sleeve, said first bone fastener assembly comprising a first bone screw and a first collar, said first collar comprising a first collar flange, said first sleeve comprising a first sleeve flange, wherein said first sleeve flange detachably couples with said first collar flange to inhibit translational motion of the first collar relative to the first sleeve;

anchoring the first bone fastener assembly to a first vertebral body by screwing the first bone screw to the first vertebral body;

detachably coupling a second bone fastener assembly to a second sleeve, said second bone fastener assembly comprising a second bone screw and a second collar, said second collar comprising a second collar flange, said second sleeve comprising a second sleeve flange, wherein said second sleeve flange detachably couples with said second collar flange to inhibit translational motion of the second collar relative to the second sleeve;

anchoring the second bone fastener assembly to a second vertebral body by screwing the second bone screw to the second vertebral body;

inserting a rod between the first collar and second collar;

securing the rod to the first collar; and

securing the rod to the second collar.

154. (New) The method of claim 153, further comprising the step of forming at least one minimally-invasive incision prior to inserting the rod.

155. (New) The method of claim 153, further comprising the step of moving the first sleeve relative to the second sleeve to facilitate compression, distraction, or reduction of the first vertebral body.

156. (New) The method of claim 155, wherein upon moving the first sleeve relative to the second sleeve is facilitated with a frame coupled to the first sleeve.

157. (New) The method of claim 153, further comprising the step of bending the rod prior to inserting the rod.

158. (New) The method of claim 153, wherein the step of securing the inserted rod to the first collar includes securing a closure member to the first collar.

159. (New) The method of claim 153, further comprising the step of using a locking system to inhibit rotational movement of the first sleeve relative to the first collar prior to anchoring the first bone fastener assembly.

160. (New) The method of claim 159, wherein the locking system comprises a moveable member, and

wherein inhibiting rotational movement comprises engaging at least one moveable member with the first sleeve and the first collar.

161. (New) The method of claim 153, wherein the first sleeve flange detachably couples with the first collar flange to form a dovetail joint.

162. (New) The method of claim 153, wherein the first sleeve flange is a ridge or groove.

163. (New) The method of claim 153, wherein the first collar flange is a ridge or groove.

164. (New) The method of claim 153, wherein the first sleeve flange is a protrusion, and

wherein the first collar flange is a groove that mates with the protrusion to inhibit translational motion of the first collar relative to the first sleeve.

165. (New) The method of claim 153, wherein the first sleeve flange is a groove, and

wherein the first collar flange is a protrusion that mates with the groove to inhibit translational motion of the first collar relative to the first sleeve.